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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 001391

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#) [REGION](#) [POL](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: GOB CONDEMNS QANA BOMBING, PUBLIC ACTIVE
YET ORDERLY

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The PM's Cabinet expressed July 30 its strong condemnation of the Qana bombing and urged the international community to intervene to stop the bloodshed of innocent civilians. While still relatively low-key and orderly, the number of public events has increased, including plans by leading Shia political society Al Wifaq to hold a "festival" August 2-3 in the government-run International Exhibition Center in support of Lebanon and "the resistance." Contributions and volunteer efforts have also become more robust, to include a UNDP delegation traveling to Damascus July 31 on behalf of the local Red Crescent Society to deliver financial assistance. Two prominent Sunnis, Shaikh Salah al Jowder and MP Shaikh Adel Al Ma'awada, are now expressing support for Hizballah's resistance. Editorials and political cartoons are more vitriolic in their anti-Israeli and anti-American sentiments. End summary.

Outrage over Qana

¶2. (U) The Prime Minister's Cabinet expressed July 30 "strong condemnation and shock over Israel's brutal massacre in Qana which claimed lives of tens of children, women, and innocent civilians." It urged the international community to intervene to stop the bloodshed and permit rescue workers access to assist the injured. The Cabinet reaffirmed its solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples who face "brutal Israeli crimes."

¶3. (U) All papers July 31 featured front page stories of the attack on Qana, most including a picture of a child being carried by a rescue worker. Headlines included "The Massacre of Qana II in Honor of Condoleezza," "U.S.-Zionist Massacre in Qana," and "Qana Massacre Is the Price of Arab Silence." Leading Shia political society Al Wifaq released a statement July 30 "denouncing the terrorist massacre committed by the Zionist enemy. The massacre killed innocent women and children with the support of U.S. arms and the bias of U.S. diplomacy." The statement also praised the Lebanese resistance's endurance in the face of Israeli aggression.

Public Events: a Festival and Protests

¶4. (U) Al Wifaq, in cooperation with the Islamic Enlightenment Society, has scheduled a "festival" entitled "We Are Ready for Resistance" on August 2 and 3 at the

government-run International Exhibition Center. The festivities will be opened the first evening with speeches, poetry, and art. The next day, musical bands from Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia (reportedly from Qatif in the Eastern Province) will sing nationalist and Islamic songs in support of Lebanon and the resistance. Funds from food sales and public contributions will go to the Lebanese people and the Lebanese resistance.

15. (U) Over the past weekend, large banners and billboards prominently displayed throughout Bahrain proclaimed July 27-28 "Lebanon Solidarity Days." In several areas of high volume vehicle traffic, youths waved Hizballah or simple yellow flags while others carried collection boxes to solicit contributions from motorists. There were several village rallies around Bahrain including at the main Shia mosque in the Manama central market. Two events were staged at the UN House: a protest by Bahraini children July 30, supported by parents and others, and a sit-in by Bahraini labor unions July 28.

Financial Aid and Volunteer Assistance

16. (C) An Embassy source told Emboff that the local Red Crescent office is coordinating with UNDP and the Ministry of Social Development, which has oversight of all civil society organization activities, including financial donations going out of Bahrain, to channel contributions to Lebanon. Twenty-three members of the Bahrain Medical Society have volunteered to participate in a medical mission to Lebanon and Syria to assist in the treatment of victims of the conflict. A collection drive led by the National Committee in Aid of the Lebanese People, in association with the

Lebanese Embassy, reportedly has raised 42,000 BD (\$112,000) from the public in shopping malls and other public places. Rotary clubs and other societies have launched collection campaigns independently.

Sunni Leaders Join the Fray

17. (U) Sunni Shaikh Salah Al Jowder stated in his Friday sermon July 28 that the Israeli action in Lebanon is part of a larger plan called the "New Middle East" that the U.S. announced at the beginning of the war on terror. Al Jowder condemned the international community for its inability to pressure Israel on its criminal acts of the last two weeks and denounced the U.S. administration's full support to Israel. He stated that even if he disagrees with Hizballah (politically and ideologically), he supports its resistance to Israel.

18. (U) MP and Al Asala political society (Salafi) president Adel Al Ma'awada stated in an interview with Arabic daily Al Waqt that there is no choice but to support the resistance against the "Zionist Enemy." He denied that Al Asala stood against the resistance in Lebanon and said that the Bahraini people should support the resistance and protect Arab people just as Israel went to rescue and protect their two soldiers. Al Ma'awada suggests that if Arab regimes had come to the rescue for Lebanese civilians, Israel would not have gone so far in its actions.

Editorials and Cartoons Critical of the U.S.

19. (U) Secular, liberal Arabic daily Al Waqt featured a front page editorial July 31 entitled "The American Bombs of Qana" holding the U.S. responsible for the incident. It asserts that the current war features Israel carrying out the war on America's behalf to disarm Hizballah. "The Lebanese know that this is her (Secretary Rice's) war and it was she who refused to call for a cease-fire until Hizballah was

completely destroyed and Lebanon with it." Akhbar Al Khaleej columnist Sayed Zahra July 31 wrote, "America participated fully in the Israeli massacre (at Qana) and the international community was backing it up. Even Arab governments that kept silent are partners in this massacre. It is time that your peoples punish you for this." In addition, political cartoons over the past several days have been equally graphic and harsh. One depicts President Bush and Israeli PM Olmert wearing surgical scrubs and shaking hands, which are dripping blood, after handing Secretary Rice the "New Middle East" baby that is drawn as a small reptilian monster.

Comment

¶10. (C) Two common themes continue to underlie public criticism of Israel's military actions: Arab governments' silence and what is perceived as U.S. complicity. Media criticism that had been up until now, reserved largely for Israel, now includes the U.S. The Sunni political community, even though it may not agree with Hizballah theologically and politically, is voicing its protests against Israeli actions in Lebanon and does not want to be seen as unsupportive of the resistance. A government concession to the Shia community to use a government-run facility for activities in support of Lebanon is a telling development. The emotional temperature has continued to grow in Bahrain, yet the Bahraini summer heat has to date helped dissuade people from hitting the streets en masse. Not only has the GOB backed away from its earlier veiled criticism of Hizballah, but it appears that it is now making efforts to quietly enable activities that may release some of the emotional steam and societal pressure.

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